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A MEMORIAL TRIBUTE TO JULIUS J. MARKE: LAW LIBRARIAN, FRIEND, AND SPLENDID HUMAN BEING (1913-2003)

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About the only task more daunting than writing a memorial for a law librarian is that of penning a eulogy for a dentist who specialized in root canal surgery. Or so I thought before I began to try to capture on paper the life of Julius Marke. It was not long before I realized that my trepidation stemmed, not from having to describe a mundane life spent in obscurity among dusty tomes, but from a realization that Julius was one of the towering figures in legal education for more than half a century. Although the current roster of the American Association of Law Librarians lists more than fifty-one hundred constituents, I doubt that either personal pride or institutional prejudice would cause any of its members to question Julius's status as the "Babe Ruth" of law librarians. Perhaps of greater significance, anyone who ever came in contact with Julius took an instant liking to him and that affection only deepened with the passage of time. The manner in which he conducted himself epitomized the old adage that "it's nice to be important but it's more important to be nice." Julius's position at the pinnacle of his profession was only exceeded by his innate kindness and decency.¹

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¹ It seems only fitting that a memorial to a first-rate legal scholar contain at least one footnote. Accordingly, I digress at this point to make mention of another aspect of Julius' personality. The pre-eminence he enjoyed in his chosen field was recognized nationally. When he graced a dais anywhere in the nation he would be introduced as the leading law librarian in the country. At such a juncture, Julius could be heard in the background exclaiming: "Not the county, the world, the world." A casual listener might be turned off by such a self-serving declaration; however, in the case of Julius Marke, everyone in attendance would smile for two very good reasons. First and foremost, his comment rang true. Of greater significance, we all knew that there was not an ounce—nay not a tincture—of conceit or pomposity in this man. Julius delighted in humor and witty comebacks. His storehouse of anecdotes and clean jokes could be brought to the fore at a

Julius began life in 1913 in the rough and tumble Mt. Morris section of New York City. This happenstance of time and place prepared him for his World War II service with the Third Army, which earned for him the "Bronze Star" and four battle citations. Julius's special talents, however, were in evidence long before 1941. Prior to entering the army, he spent ten years in various capacities at the Fifth Avenue Branch of the New York Public Library, while at the same time completing high school, college, N.Y.U. Law School, and Columbia University's School of Library Science. Shortly after V.J. Day, Julius was selected as the Assistant Librarian at N.Y.U. Law School's prestigious library. Here he served under the legendary Dean Arthur Vanderbilt. It was not long before the library's collection was expanded and refined, thanks largely to Julius's guiding hand. As a token of N.Y.U.'s affection and respect, the on-line catalog was dedicated to, and known to generations of law students and faculty as, the "Julius." As his years of service to N.Y.U. drew to a close in 1980, Julius began a second career at St. John's University School of Law. Although he had numerous offers from other prestigious institutions around the country, the fact that he had many lifelong friends at St. John's tipped the balance in our favor. Fortunately, he arrived just as the new law school building, Finley Hall, and its library component, the Rittenberg Library, were in the preliminary planning stage. In the twenty-two years that followed, Julius worked his magic in enabling the Rittenberg Library to reach its full potential. As a token of their appreciation, his colleagues recently named the law library's reference collection, as well as the room in which it is housed, in his honor. The magic Julius worked was not limited to his management of law libraries. He also enjoyed a reputation as a first-rate professor who brought the subjects of legal history and library science to life for countless students at N.Y.U. and St. John's. Julius also managed to earn for himself a reputation as a prolific, first-rate author. At last count, his scholarship in leading journals numbered in excess of 225 articles. To this total must be added twenty volumes that he either wrote or co-authored. Perhaps the best known of these literary works are his "Holmes Reader," "Vignettes of Legal History," and "Deans'

moment's notice. His repartee was as rich and rapid fire as anything one might hear at a meeting of the fabled "Algonquin Wits."

List of Recommended Reading for Pre-law and Law Students.” Down to the moment of his passing, Julius also served as the New York Law Journal’s resident expert on techniques for bringing law libraries abreast of developments in the computer age.

No sketch of Julius Marke, however brief, would be complete without alluding to the deep love he manifested for his family throughout his life. His affection for his wife Sylvia; his daughter, “Lisie”; and his grandchildren was obvious to all who labored alongside him. Although the Lord granted him ninety years on this earth, everyone agrees that he was taken from us all too soon. Whatever one’s view of the number of lawyers that will make it through the pearly gates, I am sure that their stay will be made all the more joyous by the presence of our irrepressible and irreplaceable Julius. In the words of the ancient Gaelic prayer: “May the road rise to meet you; may the wind be always at your back; and, until we meet again, may God ever hold you in the hollow of His hand.”

